George's Pink Pages

Illinois State Beekeepers Talk - June 19,1999 (Part two)

MARKETING HONEY - Unfortunately, most beekeepers are lousy salesmen and don't like "selling" in general, some even thinking it is the next thing to being sinful. In 66 years, I have never sold a jar of honey, creamed honey, comb honey, or a honey stick; but I am a powerful salesman of the DESIRE to eat George Imirie's Honey. Not only, do I divide my extracted honey by color and source, but I sell chunk honey, creamed honey, cut comb honey, 4 x 4 section honey, honeysticks, and beeswax candles. Further, to "cover all tastes", I buy and sell the specialty honeys that I can't make in Maryland, like Orange Blossom, Tupelo (because it will not crystallize), and eucalyptus; and I do this on the theory of "one-stop" shopping. Informative signs cover my booth, e.g., "Never put Honey in refrigerator", "Buy this National Honey Board Honey Cookbook", "Buy now, we will hold, you pick up later", "Buy this Christmas Gift now, put in your freezer until Christmas Time". You MUST have a fine OBSERVATION HIVE which attracts the children, who in turn fetch the parents with money, and you willingly "talk yourself to death" about the life of a bee, and the importance of their pollination to human food supply. This helps the people that are frightened of bees because of the darn "killer bee" movies, and aids in their knowing how important our bees are. None of my honey is cheaper than $3.50/pound, and people come to my booth or my home and pay this instead of buying Sue Bee Honey at $2.59 at the grocery store. SELL YOURSELF AND YOUR PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE, NOT JUST HONEY!

WHERE DO YOU LEARN? - Except for tremendous losses of bees at the beginning of this 20th century by the Tracheal Mite in England at the end of World War I and the rapid spread of American Foul Brood around the turn of the century, no great changes have been necessary in learning beekeeping since Langstroth designed the movable frame hive in 1857 until now. In just 15 years, U.S. beekeeping has been "introduced" to the microscopic Tracheal Mite, the easily spread Varroa mite, the aggressive Africanized Honeybee, the resulting fear of bees to the public where 90% of the total no longer live a rural life, but a urbanized life where the government is charged with their protection from murder to mosquito bites, from cancer to the common cold, training on-the-job to trade schools, junior colleges, or universities. TIMES CHANGE, and BEEKEEPING HAS TO CHANGE WITH IT TO SURVIVE! The Federal Government has 6 laboratories staffed by scientists paid to research beekeeper's problems and their solution. Some Universites still teach the sciences vital to beekeeping: biology, entomology, virology, biochemistry, etc. State Departments of Agriculture employ Extension Agents to work on-site of agriculture products (honey). Some of these scientists whose entire life evolves around our honey bee write detailed books that explain PROPER beekeeping methods, tools needed, seasons to be used, management techniques, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, and how to work in harmony with the bee. However, today we are primarily concerned with these new maladies of the past 15 years, beginning in 1984. I ask you: How much value for your learning is one of the fine old books that was written prior to 1984? The fact is that these older books have broad basic knowledge, but do not cover the problems that are damaging bees and beekeeping in 1999. I do not feel that any book written prior to about 1992 has much value, in that it was not able to properly address the treatment of mites, the public fear of Africanized Bees, and wonderful new research findings regarding the value of PHEROMONES. The hard work done by the research people during these troubled 15 years leads almost everyday to some new finding of value in our search

for better ways to KEEP bees. Hence, I strongly recommend to beginners and novices (Roger Morse suggests "old timers" also) the 3rd Edition (April 1998) of THE BEEKEEPER'S HANDBOOK writtened by Dr, Diana Sammataro. Not only are her statements accuate, but her drawings and sketches of "what is going on inside a hive" are so definitive, it is one of the finest 190 page book I have ever read, and the price of $29.95 is not expensive. Further, every beekeeper that is serious about his beekeeping should have some sort of "bible" about bees, and the BEST is surely the 1992 Edition of THE HIVE AND THE HONEY BEE put together by Joe Graham of Dadant right here in Illinois, but authored by the TOP 33 bee "experts" of the world in 1992, which includes your Gene Killion. The knowledge put forth in the 1300 pages of this book is dumbfounding and $36 is cheap.

ENDING NOW - There is nothing written by me without my inecting a strong personal feeling. I haven't worn gloves or a bee suit more than a couple of times in 40 years, and usually work with a Tee-Shirt and no veil. I put on hive opening demonstrations every year at the county FAIR showing the audience all wonders of the insides of a hive 4 times a day for 9 days with no veil, and I have only been stung a few times in 10 years of this demonstration. Then of course, there are exhibitions of bee beards. Are we CRAZY, or do we have some tricks? The answer is emphatically, NO! We have learned not to be ANTHROPOMORPHIC, but rather be a good student of BEE BEHAVIOR! Learn how a "bee thinks", so you can understand what that bee thinks is happening when you are manipulating those gals around. Most readers get to Chapter 8 in The Hive and the Honey Bee entitled "Activities and Behavior of Honey Bees", written by the eminent entomologist, Dr. Norman Gary, and say: "That is boring stuff, I just want that part that tells how to get more honey.", and skip reading it. They might remain a beeHAVER to rest of their lives, never learning about BEE BEHAVIOR and hence not being able to appreciate KEEPING bees. I strongly urge every person to read the words by Dr. Gary, and when you throw away you ANTHROPOMORPHIC thoughts and understand BEE BEHAVIOR, only then will you find the real JOYS OF BEEKEEPING.

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Many of my Monthly "George's Pink Pages" can be found on the Internet at:
http://www.cybertours.com/~midnitebee/ (click at lower right) or
http://www.beekeeper.org/george_imirie/index.html

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IMIRIE REQUEENING METHOD

(ALMOST FOULPROOF)

Select an exact date for your new queen to arrive and make it known to your queen breeder, and get a MARKED QUEEN. TEN days before the new queen is to arrive, insert queen excluders in between any two boxes where your old queen can go. When your new queen arrives, water her and store her in a cool dark place until needed. Gather up a double screen board, an empty hive body, 10 drawn combs, and a feeder with a gallon of 1:1 sugar syrup. Find the OLD queen (which ever brood box has larva is where the queen will be found) in the colony you want to requeen. Set her ASIDE away from the colony, so that you free to manipulate all the other frames in the colony. Select 3 frames of brood: 1 capped and 2 of eggs and larva, all with the covering nurse bees. Place these in the center of the empty hive body. Now add 6 more frames, as follows: 2 empty drawn comb, (one on each side of the brood frames), 2 frames of pollen and honey, (one on each side of the drawn comb), then 2 more empty drawn comb, (one on each side of the honey-pollen frames). This totals 9 frames leaving space for the queen cage. Now take several frames of brood ...remaining in the old colony...and shake the nurse bees into the new 9 frame nuc. Cover the nuc and set it aside for a while. Return the frame with the OLD queen to her home hive and replace the 5 frames you removed (3 of brood + 2 of honey-pollen) with empty drawn frames

Now put the double screen board on top of the old colony so that its entrance faces to the rear of the parent colony. Set the new 9 frame nuc on top and install the new queen (make sure you remove the cork from the candy end). Start feeding the new nuc immediately. After about 3-5 days, check the queen cage very quickly using little or no smoke to see if the queen has been released. If she has not, you release her from the cage. Do NOT disturb for another 5-7 days and then check with as little disturbance and smoke as possible tooking for eggs and larva. Add the 10th frame and remove the queen cage. During the next few weeks (I like about 5-6) check the brood pattern of the new queen. If you like it and want to accept that new queen, find the old queen down below the double screen, kill her, and remove the double screen board.

This method has a couple of advantages: 1) if something is wrong with the new queen, you kill her and the colony has a backup with the old queen; and you requeen the colony at a later date, and 2) for about 5-6 weeks, you have 2 queens laying eggs that increase the number of bees which will make the hive stronger for winter and reduce the stresses of Winter.

Note: If you don't have a Double Screen Board - You should. If you are not sure how it is made, imagine a wooden queen excluder frame without the metal wires, covered on both sides by 8 mesh wire - A DOUBLE SCREEN BOARD. Brushy Mountain Bee Farm in North Carolina makes and sells a fancy, very, nice one.